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THE LABORATORY ANIMAL ACT

HOW IT PROTECTS YOUR DOG AND CAT

The Laboratory Animal Act-- How it Protects Your Dog and Cat

Your dog or cat is much less likely to be stolen and sold for use in laboratory experiments these days. Also, animals intended for research or experimental use must now be provided humane care and treatment.

The reason for these improvements? Passage of the Laboratory Animals Welfare Act. Signed into law on August 24, 1966, the Act applies to the two major groups which control the destinies of most animals used in research work. They are: *Dealers*, who buy or sell dogs and cats across State lines, and *Research Facilities* that (1) purchase or transport dogs or cats interstate for experimental work or (2) receive Federal funds for conducting research on animals.

Although designed primarily to protect dogs and cats, the Act also applies to monkeys, guinea pigs, hamsters, and rabbits used in research.

Protecting Animals From Theft

The Act requires that laboratory animal dealers who handle dogs and cats must be licensed and comply with strict standards and requirements. One particularly important requirement is that the dealer must keep records that identify the dog or cat, the former owner, and when and where it was purchased. These records must be kept on file for at least one year. In addition, the primary dealer must hold all dogs and cats for at least five business days after their acquisition—excluding time in transit. This time lag gives owners and law-enforcement officials greater opportunity to trace lost or stolen animals.

Research facilities that use dogs and cats are required to register with the United States Department of Agriculture. They must comply with USDA regulations and record keeping designed to help prevent the use of stolen or lost dogs and cats for research purposes. Research facilities must keep records of purchases, sales, transportation, identification, and previous ownership of dogs and cats for at least one year. Also, they must purchase dogs or cats only from persons holding a valid USDA license as a dealer or from exempted sources such as municipal pounds, pet owners, or farmers.

As a result of these measures, the Act has greatly reduced the market for unidentified, lost, or stolen animals.

Humane Care and Treatment of Animals

Licensed animal dealers and registered research facilities must follow USDA approved procedures to insure that laboratory animals receive humane care while being



A, This jumble of patched-up cages once housed dogs and cats to be sold for research purposes; **B**, This building, designed to surpass minimum USDA standards, has 20 large holding areas or pens. The screened areas, which provide fresh air during nice weather, are closed during inclement weather; **C**, One dealer transports his dogs to research facility in this modern truck, especially designed to transport animals in air-conditioned comfort. Other dealers are using the truck as a model in designing their own; **D**, Research facilities are making a greater effort to make sure their animals receive humane treatment. This rooftop holding facility has easily cleaned inside and outside runs.

housed and transported. USDA is not authorized to prescribe standards for the handling, care, or treatment of animals during actual research or experimentation.

USDA's Agricultural Research Service officials sought the advice of many experts in drawing up standards of humane care and treatment required under the Act. These officials consulted with national animal welfare groups, established animal dealers, representatives of the biomedical research community, other Federal agencies using laboratory animals, and the Institute of Laboratory Animals Resources, National Academy of Sciences, in developing the standards. Minimum standards are now enforced for housing, feeding, watering, sanitation, ventilation, shelter from extremes of weather and temperature, separation by species, and adequate veterinary care.

Enforcing the Act

USDA animal health inspectors make frequent unannounced visits to dealers and research facilities to make sure that standards and regulations are being followed. In addition to checking on the handling, care, and treatment of animals, USDA inspectors investigate suspected dog or cat stealing cases based on complaints received.

Licensed dealers and research facilities are required to permit inspection of their animals and records by authorized USDA personnel at any reasonable time.

In enforcing the Act, USDA has uncovered numerous suspected violations. Many of the cases have been resolved without the need of court action. However, USDA has found it necessary to file charges in some cases and is still investigating others. Over 50 dealers went out of business during the first two years of the program—many of them because they did not care to or could not comply with USDA requirements for dealing in dogs and cats.

Accomplishments—First Two Years

Less than two years after the Act went into effect, USDA had licensed 204 dealers in 37 States and Washington, D.C. In addition, 555 research organizations at around 1,500 different locations in 49 States, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, were registered during the same period. USDA inspectors continue to look for nonlicensed dealers and nonregistered research facilities.

The 555 registered research facilities used almost 1 million dogs and over 300,000 cats during the first two years of the Act. Of this total, over 700,000 dogs and over

250,000 cats were provided by licensed dealers. The remainder were obtained from exempted sources or were reared by the research facilities.

Both dealers and research facilities have been upgrading their animal housing and handling. Some examples:

- *A dealer spent \$40,000 upgrading his facilities. This included: (1) replacing a dilapidated frame building with a concrete structure that meets USDA standards, and (2) replacing an old truck with a new truck constructed to comply with standards for transporting animals.*
- *A dealer demolished and burned his old buildings and replaced them with a new masonry building containing neat, sanitary, inside-outside pens and runs.*
- *A large university rebuilt a large portion of its animal quarters to provide inside-outside runs for dogs to replace previously inadequate cages. Another university rebuilt its entire animal facilities and they now exceed USDA minimum requirements.*

In addition to directly affecting the health and well being of around a million dogs and over a quarter of a million cats during the first two years, the Laboratory Animal Act has brought other benefits. It has helped focus the attention of the nation on the problem of lost or stolen animals and the need for humane treatment of dogs and cats. Recent investigations show no evidence that research facilities are using stolen or lost pets for experimentation and that care and treatment of laboratory animals has improved. The Act has also helped establish much needed communication between the scientific community and animal welfare groups. Both groups now realize that they have many of the same goals. As still another benefit, although the jurisdiction of the Act extends only to the research doors, many research institutions have asked USDA animal health officials to inspect their facilities and advise them on the humane handling of animals under research. In most cases this is done on an informal advisory basis. However, the Veterans Administration pays USDA to inspect its hospitals and to advise its officials concerning the handling and care of research animals.

What Owners Can Do To Protect Their Animals

Despite the best efforts of officials, licensed dealers, research facilities, and animal welfare groups, your pet could still be the victim of unscrupulous persons who want to make some easy money. You can help put a stop to dog and cat napping and improve your chances of reclaiming your lost or stolen pet by following these steps:

Before Pet Is Lost or Stolen

- Jot down an accurate description of the animal, including color, breed, size, and special identifying marks. Ask your veterinarian about means of identifying your animal permanently such as with a tattoo. Know your pet's license number, kind of collar, tattoo, and any other information that might help identify the animal. Keep a photograph of your pet available.
- Make sure the animal wears its collar with license tag and owner's name displayed on it.
- Make a list (with telephone numbers) of pounds, shelters, or other animal collection centers, along with local newspapers, radio and TV stations, and local officials such as police, sheriff, and dog warden. Be sure the list is readily available should your pet be lost or stolen.
- Jot down the license number and description of any vehicle you suspect might be engaged in dog or cat napping; or of transporting animals in an inhumane or cruel manner.

If Your Pet Is Missing

- Canvass your own neighborhood first to inquire if anyone has seen your pet, any roving bands of dogs, or a suspicious looking vehicle. Youngsters are usually especially alert to pets and may be most helpful.
- If your initial inquiries fail to turn up any leads, contact your police, sheriff, or dog warden, pounds, shelters, and collection centers (both locally and in nearby towns); and radio stations that advertise lost animals. Place an advertisement in your local newspapers. In all cases, leave your name and telephone number so persons finding your pet can call you as quickly as possible.
- Post description of your pet on the walls of public posting places.
- Visit animal shelters the next day to see if your pet was brought in by the dog warden's truck.
- If efforts to find your pet locally fail, widen the area of search. The longer your pet is gone, the farther away it is likely to be since a pet-napper wants to put as much distance as possible between the pet and the pet's owner.

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